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Council looks into statewide program for river walk trail improvements

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Group Editor

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Callie Beals, with the Iowa Department of Economic Development, attended Monday's Cascade City Council meeting to tell council about Gov. Tom Vilsack and Lt. Gov. Sally Pederson's new initiative called "Great Places." In an informational packet about the program, the initiative is described as being designed to, "Promote bold thought, innovation and entrepreneurship to cultivate the unique and authentic qualities that make places in Iowa so special." Beals noted to the council that the initiative focuses on "places," which could be anywhere from a highway corridor, to a neighborhood, to a community.

Council discussed the possibility of submitting the Coohey Memorial River Walk Trail as a pilot "great place" in an attempt to have the initiative help acquire funding and services. Only three pilot places will be chosen by the Great Places Citizen Advisory Board during the first year of the initiative. The board will send a coaching team to assist places that send an invitation to the board by July 1. The board will select the three pilot Great Places in the context of seven criteria: A unique sense place, engaging experiences, a rich social fabric, a vital economy, a pleasing environment, a strong foundation and a creative culture.

Even if a place is not chosen as a pilot during the first year of the initiative, it will still receive coaching to help identify, strengths, gaps, potential resources and steps needed to increase the place's level of readiness. The first year of the initiative is described as a "learning laboratory," with the process giving the state a preview of places wanting to achieve "Great Place" status in the future. This is supposed to help state agencies prepare and plan for possible programming and funding needs.

John Howard, of Cascade, who attended a meeting concerning the initiative, recommended to council that it would be in their best interest to be as bold and broad in their submission in order to attract the board's attention. "The more (state) departments you can incorporate

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in the project, the better chance you will have," he said. He also said this endeavor will need some injection from other local groups and people in order to gauge the interest of submitting to be chosen as a pilot place.

Council and Mayor Rich Knepper urged City Administrator Randy Lansing to have a meeting next week with other interested groups and citizens, such as the Parks and Recreation Board and the cycling club, in order to get an idea of an interest in submitting the trail for the initiative.

Beals also spoke with council concerning the value of economic development in rural communities. Beals told council the Iowa Values Fund offers \$50 million a year for communities to attract new business. According to Beals, 70 to 80 percent of growth comes within the state and now is the time for communities to take on "opportunity costs" for future development. Opportunity costs are costs cities incur up front, such as getting land

spade ready in an industrial park, for future development.

Beals told council they are currently in a unique position to make Cascade attractive for development given its location in the Highway 151 corridor. But, it is going to be up to the community leaders to market and sell the community to prospective developers. "You must ask the tough question, 'Are we going to be competitive?'" Beals said. "The bottom line is if you aren't willing to invest in your community, who will?"

Along with money available via the Iowa Values Fund, Beals told council the legislature has also earmarked \$1 million a year for regional development in the state and set aside \$3 million for "business accelerators." A business accelerator, which will be in place in Dubuque in the future, will surround a business with experts to help accelerate development of the business.

"Economic development is a very long-term approach," Beals explained. "You have to court some

prospect for years. It doesn't happen overnight."

In other business council:

Approved a resolution amending the city's FY05 budget by adding \$160,000 in revenue and \$312,000 in expenses.

Approved a resolution adopting the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan.

Approved a resolution accepting a quit claim deed from Maryville Family Partnershipo L.P. for lots of Cascade Manufacturing Place. The land is to be used for possible expansion of the Cascade Fire Department.

Tabled a resolution for construction contract between the city and F.L. Krapfl, Inc. for an 80-foot extension of the sanitary sewer main on 6th Avenue SW between Hayes Street and Garfield Sreet.

Approved setting employee wages and salaries with a 2.69-percent cost-of-living increase for FY06.

Approved a resolution granting cigarette and tobacco licenses for FY06 to Cascade Countrv Foods.

Cascade Sundries MCLD, Casey's General Store, Dagwoods, Lyons Service Center, McDermott Oil, Oky-Doky, The Corner Tap and The Bent Rim.

Approved the elimination of a street light on Third Ave. NW at Cleveland St.

Approved a request from Dale Stecklein to rent portions of the public street right-of-ways of Seventh Ave. SE, Eighth Ave. SE, Washington S. SE and Dillon St. SE for \$100 per acre or a total of \$230.

Reviewed deadline dates set by council for Tom Stecklein to remove private fences and trees on the street right-of-ways and compliance thus far. Council decided to give Stecklein until the deadline dates come due and take care of any work not completed at Stecklein's expense.

Approved the permanent revocation of Chuck Koppes' golf cart operating permit for continual violations of permit restrictions.

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